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# THE EFFECTS OF ART ON WELLBEING

– Case Hair



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## THE EFFECTS OF ART ON WELLBEING – CASE HAIR

When talking about wellbeing, the state of being healthy, the focus is usually put on the physical and not on the mental health. The truth is that both the physical and the mental have to be taken care of in order for a person to be able to function properly. Arts can act as a supportive and enrichment measure when thinking about mental wellbeing. A person can get these benefits from either performing the art her/himself or just by being the viewer and watching art that someone else has made.

In this thesis the authors are focusing on the wellbeing of the participants of Hair-musical. Hair musical was a production for middle-aged volunteers and it was organized by the city of Turku. The objective of the study is to find out how being a part of a musical affected the wellbeing of non-performers.

After the production the participants were asked to write an essay about their experience and in this thesis 37 of these essays are analyzed by qualitative content analysis.

The purpose of this thesis is to produce knowledge about the participants' general wellbeing by analyzing the essays written by the participants and the aim is to find out if and how culture and art may have improved and promoted their wellbeing.

From the results it's clear that taking part in a cultural activity has mostly positive effect on the wellbeing. The participants were able to express their feelings, thoughts and ideas in a whole new way. All of them were grateful that they decided to participate in the musical. Outcomes clearly showed that vast majority of participants felt positively about the Hair project. These results support the authors' findings from previous studies, that arts are really important when it comes to the person's wellbeing. Even though there are limitations in this research it is possible to say that participating in a project of performing arts as musicals could improve the wellbeing of amateur participants, although the results of this study cannot be generalized.

### KEYWORDS:

Art, wellbeing, health, culture, musical

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The needs of humanity can be divided into three categories, having, loving and being. Having includes wellbeing, education and the level of housing. Loving consists of feeling of community, and family and friendships. Being is about esteem, political resources and interesting free time activities. (Allardt 1976.) By definition, the arts are finding new things in our reality. They include the visual, literary, and performing arts. It can be argued that the arts fulfil not only the need for being, but can have a positive effect on all needs, from increasing feelings of wellbeing, to helping establish stronger community links and even increasing a person's self-esteem. (Hannula 2012.) This connection is exactly what we aim to show in this thesis, "The Effects of the Arts on Wellbeing", through evidence-based theory.

As previously mentioned, a person has needs that must be met in order to function effectively. Wellbeing, the state of being healthy, is one of those requirements. Health is defined as, "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (World Health Organisation (WHO), 1946). Although this definition clearly states that there are three factors (physical, mental and social) involved in a person's health, usually the focus is on physical wellbeing. However, it has become more and more important to also take mental health into consideration. Projects made by the Arts Council England (2007) have shown how art and culture positively affect wellbeing, especially the mental wellbeing, of a person. Moreover, culture improves social capital and gives a community the sense of belonging and vitality. Social capital is an important factor when measuring the wellbeing of people and it can also affect the economy. (Von Brandenburg 2008, 8.)

Art and culture are very effective forms of care and have been shown to have an effect on preventing depression in people in the risk of it. Art gives them a chance to express their feelings and emotions, and this can reaffirm their identity and sense of self. (White et al 2008, 103-109.)

From fall 2009 until spring 2011, the city of Turku organised a musical project for middle-aged people. They practiced and performed “Hair” –musical and after the project was finished they wrote an essay about their experiences during that time. (Felixson et al, 2011.)

The purpose of this thesis is to produce knowledge about the participants’ general wellbeing by analysing the essays written by the participants of the Hair – musical. The aim of the thesis is to find out if and how culture and art may have improved and promoted the wellbeing of the participants of Hair- musical.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Arts and health promotion

The use of Art for health and wellbeing can be considered a preventive measure. Basics of wellbeing are identification and support of individual resources. Preventive measures are divided into two categories, identification and reaffirmation of individual resources, and identification and prevention of risk factors. Arts can be a social political act that prevents exclusion and interpret diversity. (Liikanen 2010, 27.)

For life problems art is not a solution, but it can offer a distraction from the pain and suffering. While watching a movie or reading a book, it is easier not to think about things that are wrong in one's life. Reading masterpieces or watching movies with a message, can offer new point of view about life. (Von Brandenburg 2008, 18.)

A report (2007) by Kilroy et al. (2007) took a look at a project that studied what kind of impact arts had when the aim was to improve health and wellbeing. The report stated that people got more creative because of the art activities and while doing them they learned new things about themselves and new means of expression, and gained more confidence. (Kilroy et al. 2007, 6, 29.)

According to the manifest completed by the Ministry of Education of Finland (2010), every human being should have equal right to make art and participate in cultural activities. This should be regardless of the place of residence or work environment. The right should continue throughout the life, as the individual wants, and is able within the limits of creative resources. (Liikanen 2010, 10.)

Currently the governments are more aware of the effects of arts and culture to the wellbeing, therefore more and more focus is put on this area. In England in 2006, a large project was started by the funds of the government and national lottery. The aim of the project was to give everyone a chance to gain a richer and more varied artistic and creative life. They believed that this would result in

a better wellbeing for the participants. (Arts Council England 2007.) Furthermore, community based art for health is a broad area which includes different types of activities. These types are participative and therapeutic arts, health promotion, community development, environmental enhancement, exhibitions and performances, and staff development. (Angus 2002, 7.)

In 2001 Gene Cohen et al. started a study on the effects the community based cultural programs had on the general and mental health and social activities with people over 65 years of age. The cultural programs varied from jewelry making to singing in a choir. Participants were divided into two groups, the ones who participated and the ones who did not. After one year there could be seen major differences between these two groups. The ones' that had participated in cultural programs had lower medication usage and fewer visits to the doctor, and less loneliness and depression. (Cohen et al. 2006, 726-733.)

James Davison Hunter (1991) writes that the reason why arts are important is to make people happy and elevate their mood. He argues that arts should be government funded because arts can be a symbolic expression of one's feelings. Everyone experiences art differently, for some an art piece may be nothing special, but for some it may be something wonderful. (Hunter 1991, 231-239.)

It is easy to forget about those who seem to have a good general wellbeing and are still working, such people are often neglected because they are in regular contact with others. Such people who are still in working life are actually experiencing more and more mental and psychosocial problems and it is extremely important to find a solution for those problems. Arts as treatment are needed because they are a good way to enhance wellbeing as well as offer a creative way for people to express and educate themselves. When people are feeling better both physically and mentally, working environment becomes more relaxed and enjoyable. This has current significant importance because population is aging and thus this ensures that people are able to work longer. (Liikanen 2010, 26.)



Alejandro Portes (1998) writes that social capital is in need of investments of both economic and cultural resources. It has been argued that the outcomes of social and cultural capital can be reducible to economic capital, the processes through which these alternative categories are formed, are not. (Portes 1998, 4.) Social capital has many definitions, but one thing they all have in common is that “they focus on social relations that have productive benefits” (Claridge 2004). The presence or absence of social capital can affect the wellbeing of individuals as well as organizations and nations, thus social capital is also important for the society. Studies that have been conducted in this area have found that social capital can help people with health related problems, such as common cold and even cancer. It is helpful when fighting off diseases and it lowers the prevalence of these diseases. The Arts can act as an important support in the generation of social capital (Putnam & Feldstein 2003). Social capital can be built by community arts programs, which motivate individuals to being civically engaged to the community (Guetzkow 2002, 6).

A study made by Konlaan (2001) states that being part of cultural activities, such as going to the movies, theatre, concerts and art exhibitions, give clear health benefits. According to this study, people who did not take part in cultural activities were 57 per cent more likely to get ill than people who were culturally active. The study also showed that a person who had not previously participated in any cultural activities, but started to attend, had the same level of wellbeing as people who had been participating in culture for years. Also when a person stopped participating, their state of wellbeing declined. (Konlaan 2001)

Supporting this finding, a study by Hyypä & Mäki (2001) states that people who have good social capital are expected to stay more active and work longer. In this study, it was proven that the Swedish speaking Finns were more socially, physically and culturally active than the Finnish speaking Finns in the same region. The Swedish speaking population was more active in social and cultural aspects. Hyypä & Mäki believed that this was what differentiated these groups. (Hyypä & Mäki 2001, 62.)

## 2.2 Arts during leisure time

Liikanen (2003) has found four elements from art and cultural activity, which are affecting people's wellbeing. The first element is about art giving experiences, meaningful art enjoyments and fulfilling humane needs as well as stimulating senses. Secondly the art and cultural activities have been proven to have connections to better life and experiences. Third element is about how art and cultural activities give sense of community, which helps to control life. The last element is that the art adds comfort and beauty in living and working environment. (Nummelin 2011, 3.)

Being a part of culture and art can be divided into three categories: First consumer of culture, for example going to the movies, or listening to music. The second category is being a part of making of the culture, like singing, painting, acting etc. The third category is about how an individual, community and environment are being studied and new knowledge is created. (Von Brandenburg 2008, 19.) In addition, when a person participates in intellectual and artistic activities, it can give the person new ways of thinking and acting (Mills & Brown 2004, 7).

A study by Hadland & Stickley (2010) showed how excluded teenagers could be included into the community activities by participating in a community art project. Two main themes emerged; personal experience and involvement. Most of them found the experience positive and all of them noticed how important it was that everyone in the community was participating in the project. Community art projects can decrease depression and social isolation because it promotes working together and making art. Thus, as mentioned previously, participating in arts promotes wellbeing of an individual. (Hadland & Stickley 2010, 18-21.)

A study by Osgood, Meyers and Orchowsky (1990) highlighted that people over 65 years of age participating in creative dance reported positive changes in life satisfaction. Participants felt that creative dance and movement gave them freedom to express their feelings and needs. Also group participation and friendship formation were easier to achieve, and body awareness and sensitivity

ty, as well as laughter, joy and fun were encouraged. The elements mentioned by Liikanen (2003) were well achieved. (Michalos 2004, 6.) Bedding and Sadlo (2008) wrote about retired people's experiences from participating in art classes. The participants had not been engaged with arts before retirement and said to have taken part in the art classes because they wanted something to do with the time they now had, that previously was occupied by work. To the participants the art classes gave satisfaction, absorption and challenge. (Bedding & Sadlo 2008.)

In the book, "Art Therapy and Social Action" (2006), the writer, Frances Kaplan, describes how many benefits she got from writing. She felt she was able to take control of her feelings and at the same time express her thoughts. Writing also helped her deal with conditions, which were at the time chaotic. She writes, "The words felt like tears – relieving, soothing, painful and sometimes pressured. But they offered more than relief in that they provided an opportunity to reformulate overwhelming emotional reactivity into a semblance of order of thought" (Kaplan 2006, 182).

### 2.3 Arts in inpatient care

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, hospitals put art on the walls to make the environment friendlier, but nowadays they have realized how the arts can support the patients' recovery as well as the wellbeing of the patients' families'. The art also affects the staff's attitudes towards the job and coping at work. Art can be presented in many different forms, such as art exhibits or just one sculpture in the hospital grounds. (Hume 2010, 16.)

Art therapy gives a person psychological support. It is a way for the person to express emotions and feelings without having to form the words to describe them. The focus is not put on how artistic the finished piece is, but to the creativeness of the person. When in art therapy the person is given a space where expressing emotions and feelings which may be too hard to deal with alone. (Sweeney 2009, 2.) Three most commonly used art therapy forms are music,

literature and visual art therapies. Music therapy is a therapy form where the patient and therapist make music and listen to it. Patient does not have to be musically talented for the therapy to work. Literature therapy is to have the patient to express him or herself by writing, reading, listening or by having a conversation. Third form is visual art therapy with painting, drawing, carving and molding clay. (Mielenterveyden keskusliitto ry 2012.)

These art therapies can be implemented with all age groups. Barrera, Rykov and Doyle (2002) made a study with children with cancer staying in hospitals, which proved that music therapy was useful. The children felt less anxious and their comfort levels increased. In 2001 Browning showed that music therapy works also with women in labor. The women were divided into therapy and control groups, and three hours prior to delivery, the therapy group felt more relaxed than the control group. (Michalos 2004, 5-6.) Supporting this, Hume (2010) also found that women who listened to music while pregnant had lower blood pressures compared to the women who did not listen to music. There is also proof that people recovering from chemotherapy experienced 20 per cent less anxiety when going to an art exhibition. Depression was reduced by 34 per cent as well. (Hume 2010, 16.)

Arts Council England (2004) has published a report that supports previous findings about the health benefits of arts. Encouraging patients to participate in arts can help alleviate pain and side effects of some treatments as well as stress and anxiety, and to come to terms with possible major and distressing episodes in their lives. For example with the stay of babies in the neonatal intensive care unit was shorter for those babies whose treatment included music. Also for medical procedures, arts can increase the comfort level before the procedure, and to reduce the use of pain medication after an operation. (Arts Council England 2004, 2, 6.)

A literature review by Stuckey and Nobel (2010) supports these findings by stating that chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, are associated with psychological difficulties. These difficulties include stress and depression, which can have negative effects on the progression of the disease.

One way to reduce stress and depression is to participate in art projects. Art projects offer the patient a chance to escape the reality and find comfort and resources from other participants. It has also been proven that art gives people physical advantages, for example the calming effect of music on the neural activity in the brain as well as shorten the stay at the hospital. (Stuckey & Nobel 2010, 254-255.)

Research by Bull & Beavis (2008), showed how the arts can affect the wellbeing of a person with a disability. Their subject, a woman named Isobel, took part in art therapy for almost four years. Following the four-year study, her belief was that her life had changed positively and she felt that she also learned how to express her thoughts and feelings. It is very clear from the article that art therapy was a very positive experience for Isobel, and thus it strongly suggests that art as therapy can help people with especially learning disabilities but also with general wellbeing. (White et al 2008, 103-109.)

### **3 PURPOSE AND AIM**

The purpose of this thesis is to produce knowledge about the participants' general wellbeing by analysing the essays written by them about the Hair –musical. The aim of the thesis is to find out if and how culture and art may have improved and promoted the wellbeing of the participants of the Hair- musical.

The research question is: How did the participation to the Hair musical affect the participants' wellbeing according to themselves?

## 4 METHOD

The research method of the thesis is qualitative content analysis. Content analysis can be used to analyze any form of material, spoken or written. For research in social and health care field, content analysis is mostly used for media content and written material. Content analysis is helpful when qualitative information needs to be taken from for example newspaper articles, and turned into quantitative data. (Neale 2009, 78-81.)

Content analysis is used to categorize words taken from a written or spoken material into categories with theoretical importance. First a specific analysis unit, which includes individual words, word combinations or themes, is selected. After this, the units are quantified according to analyzing rules. The making of these categories is an important part of content analysis, because these categories provide the researcher a systematic means of measuring the intensity of occurrence of words, phrases, or sentences. (Burns & Grove 2001, 604, 620.)

The data we are using was gathered from the essays written by the participants of the Hair- musical and was given to us by our coordinator. To analyze the data we are doing an inductive content analysis, which allows us to point out the similarities in the essays as well as give us a clear and consistent view of the data. (Silius 2005, 3-4.) Inductive content analysis consists of open coding, creating categories and abstraction. In open coding the material is read through repeatedly and the similarities are marked on the text. After open coding, categories are created with the purpose of understanding the text and being able to point out the similarities. The researcher has to decide which point goes under which category. The final part is abstraction where general description of the research topic is being formulated through categories. (Elo & Kyngäs 2007, 109-111.)

## 5 RESEARCH MATERIAL

This thesis topic was given by the Cultural Capital Turku and Turku University of Applied Sciences (see Appendix 1). The production of the musical Hair was organized by the Cultural Capital Turku. Participants were middle-aged people from around Turku who wanted to add more variety and some new aspects in their lives. They had different backgrounds although they had some similarities also. In this thesis the main focus is on the essays written by the participants in the Hair –musical. In the spring 2011, the participants were given a questionnaire and asked to write an essay about the experience. Out of the over 120 participants, 37 submitted an essay.

Most of the participants were women, but there were also a few men. Originally the production was meant for middle-aged people, but from the essays we found out that they were hesitant to participate because they felt they did not qualify for the age range. The average age ranged from about 40 to over 60 years. Out of the 37 who admitted an essay, 11 were between 40 and 50 years, 11 were between 51 and 60, 6 were over 60 and 9 did not submit their age (see Figure 1.).

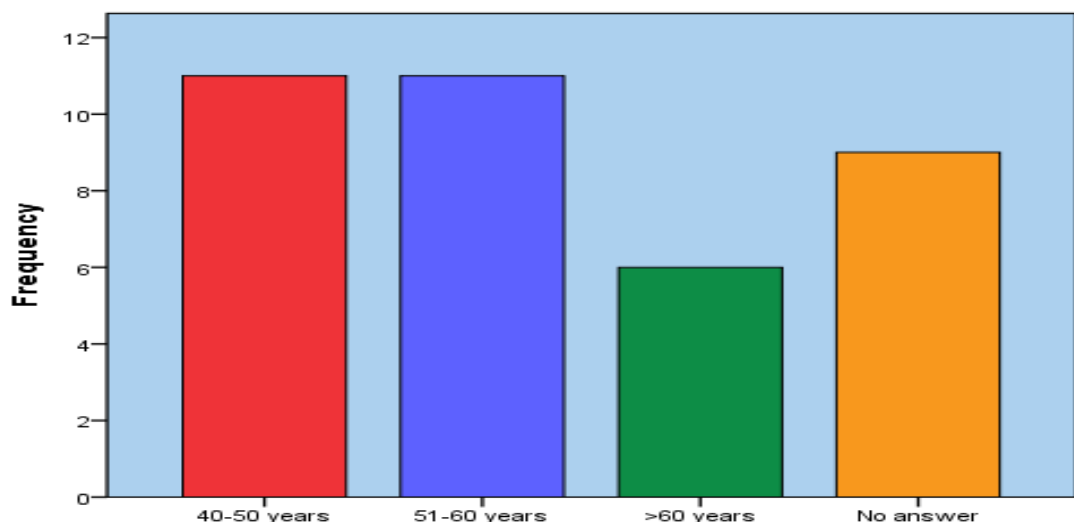


Figure 1. The age of the participants.



We were also interested in the relationship status of the participants, because many of the participants had changes in their relationships during the production, some suggested that the production was partly to blame for these changes and affected their experience. Out of 37, 13 were married, 3 were divorced, 3 lived together with their companion, 5 were in a relationship, 3 were single and 10 submitted no answer (see Figure 2.).

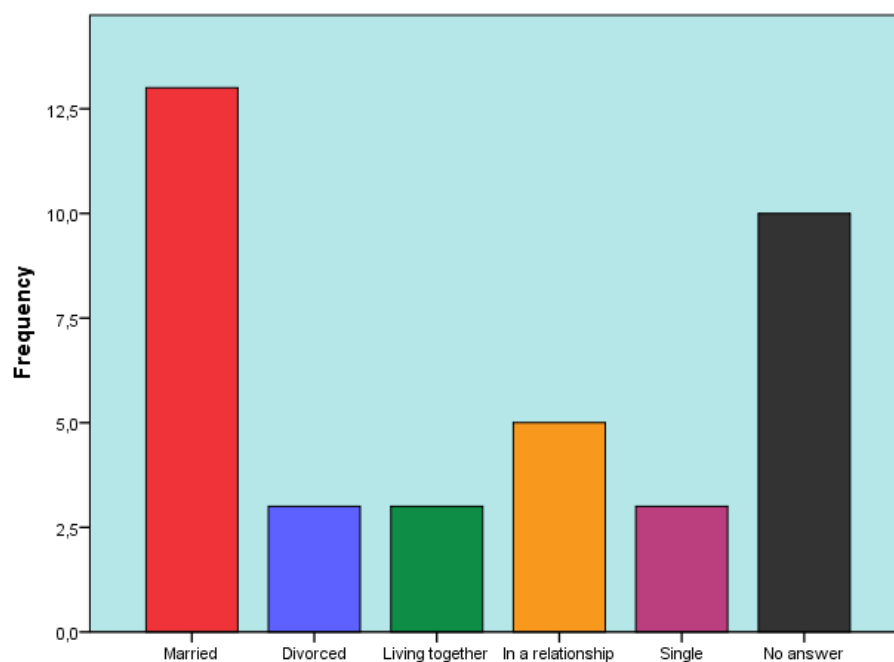


Figure 2. The relationship status of the participants.

## 6 RESEARCH ANALYSIS PROCESS

An inductive content analysis was done from the essays the participants had written. We both read the essays many times and highlighted the points we thought were similar and came up in many essays. We shared our findings and discussed what the main points were. This is how we then formed the categories as explained in the next paragraph.

The quality of the essays varied. Some participants wrote very short ones and focused on the questions that focused on the changes on wellbeing, social relationships, work life and free time activities, and some wrote more freely and mentioned personal aspects of their lives. In the end it was quite easy to find the nine sub-categories, which were escape from troubles, feeling of community, feeling of success, professional instructions, effects of the production, first reactions, sense of emptiness, time consumption and premiere. These were very clear and present in almost every essay. From these nine sub-categories we created three main categories; Positive feelings, negative feelings and things to improve.

Out of the essays we formed three main categories and nine sub-categories (see Figure 3. and Table 1.). Under the positive feelings category there are escape from troubles, feeling of community, and feeling of success, professional instructors, effects of the production and premiere. Negative feelings category consisted of first reactions and sense of emptiness. The last main category is things to improve and that includes time consumption.

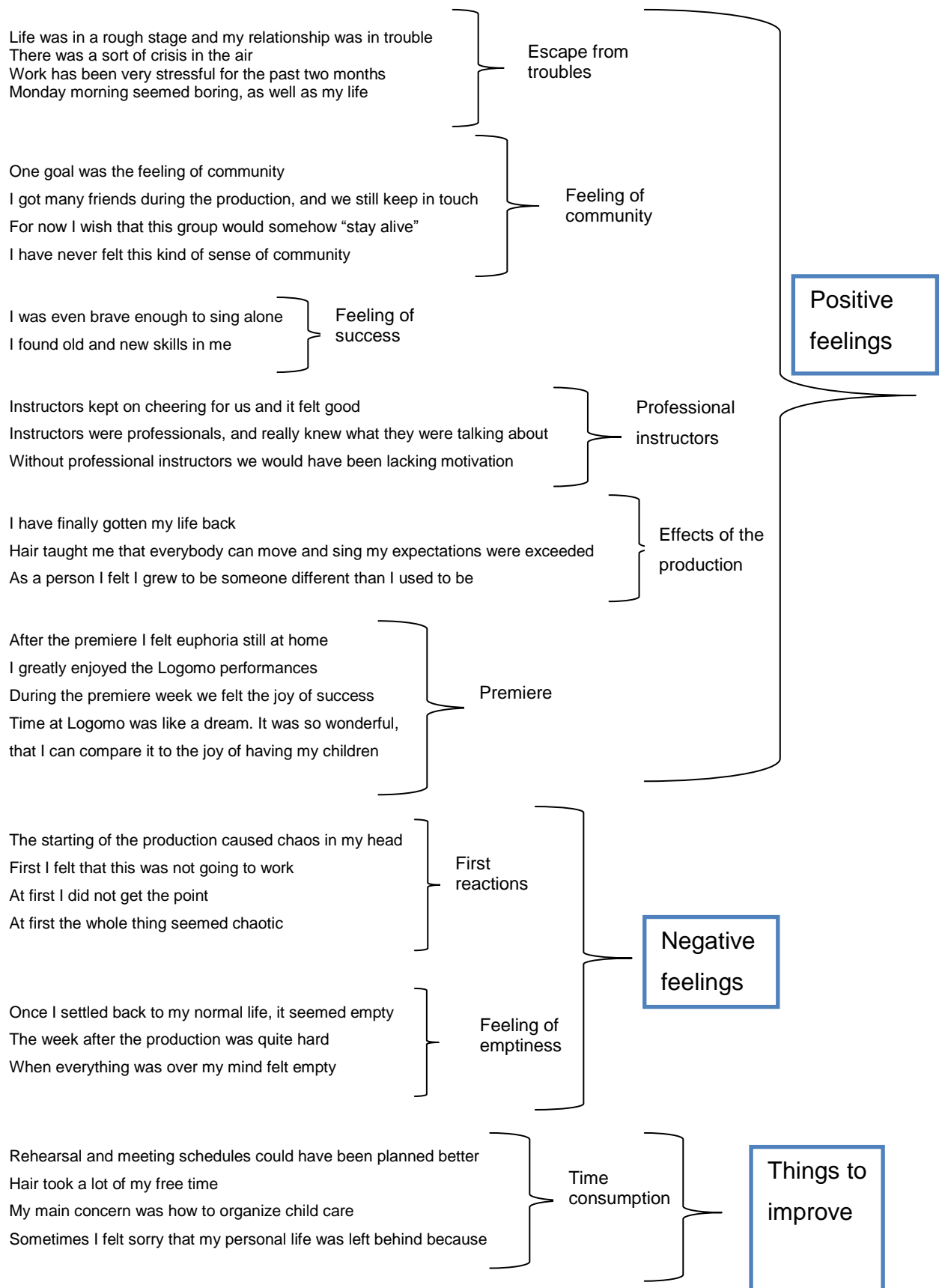


Figure 3. Forming of the categories.

Table 1. Categories and sub-categories.

Main categories	Sub-categories
Positive feelings	Escape from troubles Feeling of community Feeling of success Professional instructors Effects of the production Premiere
Negative feelings	First reactions Sense of emptiness
Things to improve	Time consumption

## 7 RESULTS

### 7.1 Positive feelings

This category is based on the positive feelings the participants got from participating in the Hair- musical. Most had only positive feelings about the project and it also helped them with their daily lives. Many made new friends and felt that all the participants together formed a community. The guidance from the professional instructors was really important because with that the participants got the feeling of success and also got the benefits from participation.

#### **Escape from troubles**

For many participants life changed during the production of Hair- musical. Some experienced death in the family, ended a relationship or had relationship crises. The production offered them a chance to escape from these problems and helped to cope during these difficult times.

*“In July my husband passed away from a cerebral hemorrhage. I decided after all to continue with the production, because it always felt good and it took my mind off the difficult things going on.”*

*“On New Year’s Eve I found out that my relationship was over.”*

*“Especially my relationship got neglected. In March we had a major relationship crisis, which we got through with therapy sessions and a lot of talking. In the end we decided to continue our marriage and we fell in love all over again. I am sure that Hair was partly to blame for the crisis, but because of this crisis, our relationship is better than ever.”*

#### **Feeling of community**

In most of the essays it was clear that “Hair” offered a strong sense of community. There were three smaller groups that formed tight relationships. Of course there were also people who did not get along, but there were so few of them, that it did not interfere with the formation of tight groups. When the groups were

put together, the formation started again, but took less time. Almost everyone stated that they made many friends who they still stay in contact with.

*“What was nice about this musical journey was that I got to know new people.”*

*“I got to experience an amazing year and a half with interesting people. I experienced the formation of community, first with the smaller group and finally with the whole group.”*

As the community among the whole group was formed, everyone supported each other and because of that participants felt they could give everything they have, without the fear of being laughed at. This helped the most uncertain participants to get over their fears of performing. For some this was the reason to keep going even if they sometimes felt like dropping out.

### **The feeling of success**

When a few performances were done, the participants started to realize that they were able to actually do this, but still every performance was a separate one and that anything could happen. After a successful performance they felt happy and full of energy.

*“At the beginning the performances were exciting as well as exhausting. Later on they became wonderful and I really wanted to get on the stage.”*

### **Professional instructors**

It was clear from many of the essays that the professional instructors were appreciated and without them the production would not have been as successful as it was. The only critic was the lack of discipline at the beginning but at the end everyone was thankful for their aid and participation. Instructors' patience while teaching new things to amateurs was recognized.

*“Without professional instructors we would have been lacking motivation.”*

*“I appreciated the instructors' supportive feedback. They kept encouraging us and that felt good.”*

*“Professional instructors gave us information about everything from dancing to singing and performing, and about other aspects of life. Great thanks to them!”*

## The effects of the production

Participants stated a sense of better wellbeing after the production. All had something positive to say about their feelings after the experience. Some felt physical benefits and some had mental benefits. Almost all felt more energetic and that they got something to make it easier to cope in everyday life.

*“As a conclusion the whole middle-aged Hair production has been one of the best experiences in my life so far and it affects are long term and enrich my life from now on. Because age range was broad, I belonged into the older middle-age group. But I felt younger than my age because I got to experience the joy and enthusiasm that the production gave us.”*

*“My life situation was quite difficult when the production started. The production gave me time for myself and new strengths to keep going. I believe that this helped me both mentally and physically to cope.”*

*“Satisfaction of the production and going through it affects positively to my well-being. My motivation toward my health and appearance has also grown.”*

*“All of you who were part of the production have seen the power, joy of life and creativity which started to blossom in me.”*

## Premiere

Everyone was excited about the premiere, this was the moment they had waited and practiced for. Some felt that they started to rehearse at the real stage, Logomo, quite late, but still the premiere was better than expected. All of them felt really good after the first performance and wanted to keep going. Almost everyone said that they “had butterflies”, but as soon as they entered the stage, they forgot everything else.

*“After the premiere I felt euphoria still at home.”*

*“We stood quiet behind the curtains, the theatre went dark and the band started to play. And then Aquarius! The mood was fabulous.”*

*“I enjoyed so much of all of the Logomo performances. There should have been more of them! The group spirit was awesome and we succeeded in all the performances above the expectations.”*

## 7.2 Negative feelings

Even though most had positive feelings, negative feelings were also pointed out. There were periods when they felt chaotic and that the production was not going to be ready on time. The ending of the production brought up negative feelings to some.

### First reactions

At first many of the participants felt a sense of chaos. They felt that what they were doing was not related to the musical itself, and that they wanted to start rehearsing the dances and songs from the Hair- musical. Participants felt that time was running out and they were worried they would not be finished and ready to perform in time.

*“At first the Hair –musical seemed totally chaotic, but after half a year the performance started to form.”*

*“First I felt that this is not going work, but as the practices continued, I started to believe that we can do this.”*

One possible reason the sense of chaos was the fact that there were over 120 participants and only a few directors. Some participants felt that they could not hear and focus on the instructions because of the noise. They hoped that the directors would have been stricter from the beginning.

### Sense of emptiness

After the last performance most of the participants felt empty and some even experienced some form of depression. Hair production had filled their days during these couple of years, and once it was finished, they noticed how much of their time it had consumed. Some of them said to be interested to participate in a new project, similar to Hair. For a few weeks after the last performance, some participants were really tired, but after a while got back into their normal daily rhythm.



*"I have to admit that after Hair ended the emptiness hit me; I missed people and practices and to perform in Logomo. On the other hand it was a relief that the same songs were not playing over and over again in my mp3, and that I could actually spend an evening at home."*

*"I experienced withdrawal symptoms after the ending party. I was depressed and unwell and this was not because of a hangover."*

*"The wonderful thing that now I do not have to run to practices every night. Some good friends remain. I feel great after this experience but I am happy it is over."*

### 7.3 Things to improve

The thing that was most clear in this category was that planning of the timing could have been better. Some participants stressed about not having enough time to rehearse but also that their personal life had to be put aside for a while.

#### **Time consumption**

As the premiere got closer, practices were increased up to 3 times a week. Many said that it took a lot of their time, but it was worth it. Some participants, however, felt that their private lives did not get as much attention as needed.

*"Practices were usually straight after a long day at work, but I did not feel tired. Practice became so important that everything else needed to be fitted into that schedule."*

*"The week leading up to the premiere was great, although mentally exhausting."*

*"Of course I did not have that much time to spend at home with the family or meet my relatives and friends. I did my work carelessly."*

Many doubted their abilities to perform and learn all lines, dance routines and songs on time. They felt that time was passing fast and they did not have enough time.

## 8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability and validity can be substituted with the term trustworthiness. This term includes four aspects, which are credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Inside these aspects were methodological strategies that are used to demonstrate qualitative thoroughness. This in turn includes the audit trail, member checks when coding, and categorizing. (Morse et al 2002, 14.) For a qualitative research to be good, it needs to help the researcher to understand an otherwise confusing situation. In a qualitative research, reliability is a concept to generate understanding. (Golafshani 2003, 601.)

It is important to use reliable sources and be accurate with the data collection and analysis. It is necessary to respect the other researchers by marking the used references correctly. Results need to be seen clearly and the results we have are very clearly stated in the essays. (Oulun Yliopisto 2012.) Following these instructions, the authors have followed the principals of the ethical acceptability, reliability and the foundation of the results of the research studies.

In the study it is important that the information gathered is the information needed. The validity can be divided into inner and outer validities. The inner validity is that the research question is being answered, and the outer validity means that the research can be generalized and that other researches also support the findings. (Krause & Kiikkala 1996, 69.) In this thesis these matters have been noticed and taken into consideration, hence the literature review supports our findings.

All the materials used in a research need to be reliable for a decreased chance of a random error. Every time new material is brought into the research process, its reliability needs to be considered for the material not to provide wrong information. The researchers cannot be biased about the research or the material used. (Burns & Grove 2001, 226, 396.) The participants wrote the essays themselves, and the other material, such as research articles, books and websites were from reliable sources, where all the needed information, for example the

author(s), and year of publication, could be found. Thus the material was reliable.

Before the authors started to write the actual thesis a project plan was made and approved by the instructors. In the project plan the authors proved that they have planned how to proceed and they made sure that the thesis wouldn't cause harm to other research. Throughout the writing process the authors let the instructors and colleagues to read the material for feedback and guidance.

## 9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The word ethics describes the way of taking moral life into consideration when doing a research. Impact on the participants must be considered, when planning the action of the research, for the research cannot cause the participants any kind of harm in the future. In a research in the health care field it is not always easy to act morally correct and sometimes difficult ethical decisions have to be made. (Neale 2009, 31.)

Ethical principles, beneficence, non-maleficence, respecting a person's autonomy and justice, were also followed. Beneficence means that the authors' aim was to produce trustworthy findings and results. Non-maleficence is about no harm should be done. Respecting person's autonomy includes that every person is treated as an individual. The final principal, justice, states that every individual should be treated with justice and fairness. (Neale 2009, 35-36.)

In this thesis the authors have followed the ethical principles by taking into consideration the participants, their family members, financial supporters, working communities and coworkers (Krause & Kiikkala 1996, 64). As Burns & Grove (2001) describe, the participant's human rights that require protection during the research were also protected. They had the right to self-determination, which meant that they were informed what purpose the essays would be used and that they could decide if they wanted to write one. They also had the right for privacy and the questions for the essays only focused on their feelings for Hair-musical production and they were not forced to tell any private information if they didn't want to. The essays are anonymous and confidential so the participants who wrote them felt more comfortable with sharing their private thoughts without the fear of being recognized. The only demand for participating was that the person has to be middle -aged. It didn't matter what sex they were or what their profession was thus the right to fair treatment was also present. (Burns & Grove 2001, 196-204.)

The production lasted a long time, and all the participants were volunteers. They had the right to leave at any point if they wanted. The participation was not binding: if their life situations were to change, participants were able to quit. Every participant was treated as an individual, even though they were working in groups.

## 10 DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Like Nummelin (2011) writes in her article, the needs of humanity are having, loving and being. From the essays we could clearly see that these needs are in balance. If one of the needs is imbalanced, it also affects other aspects of life. Few participants of the Hair production lost their family member and at the same time the support for the participation from home. It is obvious according to the essays that this had a major effect on the participants.

On the other hand Liikanen (2003) found four elements that affect a person's wellbeing. These all were fulfilled during the production. From the essays we could see that the participants got new experiences from the project and that it enriched their lives. Secondly some participants felt younger as the production continued and that their general wellbeing was better. Third element came true as the participants stated that they felt a sense of community and made new friendships that lasted after the production as well. The fourth and last element states that art adds comfort and beauty in life, which was clearly to be seen from the essays. The participants wrote that they got support during difficult times, which they would have otherwise had to be going through by themselves.

During the production some of the participants experienced changes in their lives. Some lost a spouse or a child, and some went through a break up from a life partner. A few stated that they had some difficulties in life during the production. Like mentioned in Arts Council England's (2004) report, arts can help to cope with these situations. It was clear from the essays that the production gave them support and an opportunity to concentrate on something else. In addition, Von Brandenburg (2008) supports previous statement, by saying that art can offer a distraction from the pain and suffering.

In the beginning some participants said that they felt lonely and did not have a big social circle, and people to rely on. But once the production progressed, and the sense of community got stronger, they felt that they had gotten new friends and people to talk to as well as share experiences. For some the friendships

have lasted even after the production ended. The participants are thankful for the production, for this opportunity to make new friends and get back into the community.

The participants also described how they felt alive after the production and how they got new motivation and energy to start changing their lives for the better. It has been proven, Kilroy et al. (2007), that arts can give a person new aspects in life and new way of thinking. When a person is learning new skills, she or he has to adapt new ways of thinking and working, and this will affect the way she or he thinks about other things as well. The arts can also give a person freedom to express their feelings, some of which the person may not have been aware of, as mentioned by Michalos (2004). Also research by Cohen et al (2001) supports these arguments by showing that what a person can get from participating in a cultural program is beneficial to the person's wellbeing. This research had many of the same points what we had found in the essays.

The project would probably not have been organized if Turku city had not been the cultural capital in 2011. We believe that without the support from Turku city, the production would not have been as successful and as grand as it was. James Davison Hunter (1991) argues that cultural activities should be government funded for people to be able to participate without having to spend that much money and only focus on making the art and expressing their feelings. Hunter also states that art makes people happier and elevates their mood.

Liikanen (2010) wrote that people who are still in working life can be forgotten, in regards of their wellbeing. It is thought that being at work every day supports their social capital, but for many it is not so. As many of the participants were still working, and said that having done the same job for many years, it started to be dull and they felt unmotivated. Being part of the Hair musical gave the participants new energy and strength to keep working.

As previous studies suggest, dancing and music can be great ways of expressing one's feelings, even if the person is not a professional dancer or singer. This was also clear from the essays. The participants wrote that they were surprised

how much they enjoyed those activities, even if they had felt uncomfortable and doubted themselves at first. Their talents evolved during the production and in the end some of them wanted to continue with their new found hobby.

One thing that there were no previous studies found, but was frequently mentioned in the essays, was the importance of the professionals directing the production. For the participants the presence of the professionals was very important and they appreciated that. The professionals gave the participants valuable knowledge about their own special skills. They also encouraged and kept the participants motivated when most needed. We feel that it is important to have someone, who knows about the type of cultural activity one is about to participate in for the first time to help and give advice.

The thing that surprised the authors was that the participants had only a few negative points about the production. Usually if a large group is working together assumption is that there would be more negative feelings. Overall the essays were very positive, because during the production, social capital was clearly present as many of the participants said how good the sense of community was and how important it was for them. They got support and encouragement from each other and because of that, going to practice was enjoyable. The lack of negative feedback may be because not everyone submitted an essay, maybe the ones who did not submit an essay had only negative feedback and feelings about the production.

The possible limitations in this study were that only about a third of participants submitted an essay. All in all there were about 120 participants and only 37 submitted an essay. Because of this we might have missed some important thoughts. Most essays were written by female participants, which could also be a limitation. The project was planned for middle-aged people in Turku area, so again the sample was small. It did not consider the younger population or people in other regions. The authors being first time researchers could also be considered as a limitation.



As a conclusion we found that arts and culture are really important for the well-being of the mind and the body. This will help a person to cope with problems and obstacles in life as well as the daily chores. Arts and culture can also give a person new aspects and methods to express feelings. We feel that it is very important that in the future communities would recognize the importance of arts and culture as preventive measures against poor health, as well as a chance to create a feeling of community.

When it comes to the production Hair, the participants had mostly positive feelings. For some the production was an escape method from daily troubles as well as a place to express one self. They learned new things about themselves and what they were able to achieve. They found new friends and learned how to work in a group. In the end, the most important thing was that the participants got new way of life from the production. They felt more energetic and younger again. Some of them decided to continue with this kind of activities, while some felt that the experience was wonderful but that this one time was enough. In the end it can be noticed that the results from the previous researches supported our findings.

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